

Arizona Department of Education Strategic Plan

Vision: *“Access to extraordinary education.”*

Mission: *“To ensure academic excellence for all students.”*

“I have frequently been asked what three or four goals I want to achieve in the next four years.....there is one goal that sums it up: that Arizona students learn substantially more than they have been learning.”

--Superintendent Tom Horne
Inaugural address (January 6, 2003)

Values:

For schools to be successful and for the Arizona Department of Education to accomplish its mission, the department believes the following:

- Schools need strong leadership with vision.
- Learning and curriculum must be challenging but appropriate.
- Students need highly qualified and engaging teachers.
- Schools and administrators must make effective use of data to make informed decisions.
- Public education needs adequate and equitable human and financial resources.
- Schools must cultivate a safe, healthy and nurturing learning environment for students.
- Family and community involvement must be cultivated and maximized.

Internally, the department believes in emphasizing certain principles in carrying out its work:

- Quality comes first
- Teamwork is fundamental
- Improvement is essential
- Partnerships are necessary

The Arizona Department of Education operates under the direction of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to provide direct services to approximately 1,431 schools in 237 locally governed school districts, and 459 charter schools. These schools serve approximately 1,053,500 students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The agency executes the policies of the State Board of Education and the State Board of Vocational and Technological Education - implementing state academic standards; administering statewide assessments; disseminating information; administering and allocating federal and state funds; and providing program improvement assistance to schools and districts.

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Goal One: Provide leadership by initiating and advancing improvements to public education.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne began his term with an entirely new top executive team for the Department of Education. These positions have been filled with experienced educators and emphasize one of our principal themes: the new Department of Education will provide educational leadership, including drawing on talented teachers, principals, and administrators to help all of our schools achieve academic excellence. This type of leadership must continue to raise the bar and improve academic performance in Arizona's public schools.

Objective 1.1: Set fair and reasonable policies and standards which foster excellence in public education.

- Adopt and prescribe a minimum course of study in schools and minimum competency for students that are based on *high standards*.
- Review and develop a fair and accurate *accountability plan* for public education in Arizona by coordinating the requirements of No Child Left Behind with Arizona LEARNS while seeking maximum flexibility.

Objective 1.2: Improve communication and involvement with the education community and other stakeholders.

- Improve *communication and outreach* to the education community to generate input and discussion on education policy and initiatives.
- Increase *participation and collaboration* with a variety of stakeholders to cultivate involvement and important partnerships.

Objective 1.3: Advocate and promote ideas and initiatives that will advance innovation and enhance resources for public education.

- Develop *special projects and initiatives* that support and promote department and State Board of Education goals.
- *Increase resources for public education* by promoting administrative efficiency, cultivating partnerships and pursuing increases in federal funding.
- Work with the community to *improve access* to early education; career and technical training; family literacy and adult education; workforce development and other issues important not only to public education but to Arizona's quality of life.

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Goal Two: Offer support to public schools and providers for exemplary performance.

Superintendent Tom Horne has committed the Department of Education to be primarily a service organization, helping school districts, charter schools, and contracted educational providers achieve more academic success. To do this, the department will establish a broad range of supports for schools and educators in their efforts to build strong foundations for our students. The department will provide training, school improvement assistance, evaluation, dissemination of information, and funding that will assist schools with targeted issues. The department also serves as the primary source of current, reliable and accurate information on the latest innovations in public education. This includes information on scientifically based programs and the design and implementation of prevention and intervention strategies.

Objective 2.1: Provide technical assistance and training for schools to improve effectiveness and school climate.

- Undertake original applied research along with the **identification, evaluation, and sharing of critical information and best practices** in public education.
- Evaluate underperforming and/or schools that fail to meet academic standards and provide **proactive counsel** on how to make improvements.
- Organize and hold **conferences/workshops** on various topics to assist schools in **improving effectiveness** and implementing best practices.
- Acknowledge school innovation by **recognizing schools/districts** with outstanding programs and practices.
- Provide **guidance** and assistance to schools in implementing **specialized efforts** critical to school success including: **broaden curriculum** and enrichment programs; student **health and safety**; **character education** and making focused improvements to **discipline**; **reading achievement**; and dealing with **special populations** and at-risk students.

Objective 2.2: Provide technical assistance and training for schools on federal and state compliance issues.

- Offer and provide **one-on-one technical assistance** and guidance for interpretation and implementation of rules and regulations, along with the resolution of issues.
- Organize and hold **conferences/workshops** on various topics to assist schools in meeting Arizona's **accountability requirements**.
- Develop/make available **publications and correspondence** (written & on-line) addressing policy requirements on various department issues.

Objective 2.3: Offer professional development opportunities to educators and administrators.

- Develop and implement a **plan for supporting the continuum of teacher/principal growth** from attraction through certification, mentoring, and professional learning and development.
- Organize and hold **conferences/workshops** on various **personal and professional development** topics important to educators and administrators including State Board of Education rules and regulations.
- Develop/make available **on-line training/materials** on information to improve instruction & academic skills of school personnel.
 - Increase the supply of teachers and administrators by providing **information on employment opportunities** and reducing barriers to entry into the profession by offering **alternative pathways**.

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Goal Three: Ensure maximum academic and financial accountability in public education.

A system of real school accountability is important to improving our educational system. However, it must be fair with expectations clear and understandable. With the passage of Arizona LEARNS and the federal requirements of No Child Left Behind, the department is taking steps to develop an accountability system that will provide students and their families with the information they need. The department is committed to ensuring: 1) academic accountability -- all students have the skills and knowledge they need to succeed; 2) financial accountability -- getting the most from every dollar spent on public education; and 3) educator accountability -- high quality teachers and administrators along with student safety.

Objective 3.1: Implement assessment of all Arizona students and report results to the public.

- Develop **academic content standards** that are reasonable, fair, and appropriate for all Arizona students.
- Develop and administer a **standards-based assessment** that matches the academic content standards in order to measure student achievement.

Objective 3.2: Review, monitor and report on the performance of Arizona's public schools and providers.

- Review, monitor and audit the expenditures of school districts and providers for **financial compliance**.
- Monitor and ensure **improvements in academic achievement** for all students.
- Ensure **compliance with state and federal statutes, regulations** and other contractual obligations.
- Prepare federal and other required **plans, certifications and applications** for compliance and accountability purposes.

Objective 3.3: Ensure the quality of Arizona's educators through evaluation, investigation and certification.

- Administer and improve the quality of Arizona's **teacher and administrator assessments**.
- Verify the professional and content knowledge of teachers and administrators and **issue appropriate certificates**.
- **Investigate and report on complaints** of professional educators in a thorough and timely manner to ensure student safety.

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Goal Four: Deliver high quality customer service.

There has been a shift toward emphasizing the importance of customer service in the Department of Education since Superintendent Tom Horne took office. Along with this service orientation, the department is committed to improving employee morale and productivity, along with creating a spirit of teamwork. Improving service and productivity will require attention, commitment and innovation with a focus on results. It is the intent of the Department of Education to be a model of good, effective government and be known for its responsiveness and high quality of services.

Objective 4.1: Provide timely, reliable **support services**.

- Enhance services by ***evaluating department efforts*** through a continuous improvement process, surveying customer satisfaction and offering employee training on customer service.
- ***Streamline paperwork and monitoring expectations*** so that school/district staff are able to operate at maximum efficiency.
- Employ the use of technology to ***increase automation and the amount of web-based applications*** available for department business.

Objective 4.2: Provide accurate and helpful **information** to the public.

- Increase the ***quality and amount of information and data*** about the agency and Arizona education provided to constituents and the public.
- Increase ***media coverage*** on the services and programs of the department.
- ***Answer questions*** from the general public ***and resolve disputes*** on problems associated with Arizona's public education system.

Objective 4.3: Promote a positive and productive **work environment** that cultivates teamwork and motivates employees.

- Improve ***employee satisfaction and morale*** by improving communication, promoting teamwork and recognizing individual contributions.
- Offer more ***professional development and training*** opportunities for department staff.
- Increase the ***use of data and information technology*** as a management tool to make better informed decisions.
- Ensure that necessary ***fiscal and managerial systems*** are in place to provide maximum accountability and performance.

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Report Card on Key Indicators

Performance Measures	FY 2004 Actual	FY 2005 Actual	FY 2006 Estimate
Student Achievement			
Percent of Grade 2 students tested who perform at or above the national norm (Terra Nova test) – reading.	46%	52%	52%
Percent of Grade 2 students tested who perform at or above the national norm (Terra Nova test) – math.	53%	52%	52%
Percent of Grade 9 students tested who perform at or above the national norm (Terra Nova test) – reading.	35%	52%	52%
Percent of Grade 9 students tested who perform at or above the national norm (Terra Nova test) – math.	57%	52%	52%
Percent of students in grade 11 meeting or exceeding state academic AIMS standards in reading.	38%	56%	56%
Percent of students in grade 11 meeting or exceeding state academic AIMS standards in math.	27%	60%	60%
Percentage of learners age 16 years and older achieving educational gains in Adult Education.	42%	50%	52%
Percent of Career and Technical Education participants placed in school, job, or military after graduation.	67.5%	68.0%	68.5%
Percent of Arizona high school students who enter 9th grade and graduate within 4 years. (*FY 2003 = FY 2001 Cohort, FY 2004 = FY 2002 Cohort, FY 2005 = FY 2003 Cohort)	*72.7%	*74.0%	74.5%
Percent of students that drop out of high school (based on previous school year).	8.5%	4.8%	4.8%
School Performance			
Percent of Arizona schools receiving an underperforming label.	12.4%	7.0%	6.5%
Percent of schools with at least 75% of students meeting or exceeding standards in reading.	21%	34%	34%
Percent of schools with at least 75% of students meeting or exceeding standards in writing.	33%	39%	39%
Percent of schools with at least 75% of students meeting or exceeding standards in math.	12%	34%	34%
Educator Performance			
Percent of applicants successfully passing professional content and knowledge certification examinations.	80%	90%	91%
Number of investigative cases closed.	237	216	225
Department Efforts			
Total amount of all federal funds secured by the department for public education.	\$730 million	\$840 million	\$910 million
Number of AIMS Dual Purpose assessments administered.	N/A	475,000	500,000
Number of constituent inquiries responded to within two-week time frame.	4,332	4,650	4,700
Number of enrollees in Special Education Learning Experience for Competency in Teaching (SELECT) classes.	626	700	725
Number of educators participating in Career & Technical Education workshops.	1,161	1,261	1,361
Number of people attending annual English Language Learner proficiency workshops.	600	500	600
Number of department website “hits” (in thousands).	135,866	130,924	135,000
Percent of employees satisfied with their job.	75.2%	72.8%	75.0%